'Windows' program worth price

From a company with an unusual name comes an innovative program called "Flash-Up Windows" that I predict you'll want to use everyday in your office.

Flash-Up Windows, from Software Bottling Co., lets you construct your own "windows" that flash up on your IBM PC or PC-compatible's screen at the touch of a key. You can put anything you want in the windows — product descriptions, reminders, menus, instructions to staff — that can be accessed in the middle of other programs being run.

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There are many programs on the market which are RAM resident, meaning that they reside all the time in the random access memory of your computer and are available the instant a specified key is touched. But almost all such programs are intended for a particular purpose. Available are RAM-resident note-taking programs, schedulers, spell-checking programs, thesaurus programs and outliners.

Three features make Flash-Up Windows different from all other products:

✔ First, the windows are all-purpose in that you can make them include anything you want. The windows can be any size — even covering the entire screen, in any combination of colors. You can define what key or combination of keys will be used to display the windows on the screen.

✔ Second, the windows can contain choices that you define. For example, when you first turn on your computer, a window could automatically appear that gives you the choice of which program to run. By pressing the first letter of each choice, a macro, or short file of commands, is run to load that program. Then, while running a program, windows can be set up to give the user almost unlimited other choices. Some choices might display additional windows with still further choices. Entire libraries of windows can be constructed that branch from one to another.

✔ Finally, Flash-Up Windows presents a very easy-to-use interface for novice users. The windows are ideal for programmers or executives to provide simplified choices to others using PCs in their company or department. Thus, Flash-Up Windows is an instructional tool, unlike other RAM-resident programs designed to do only a specific task.

For example, an order-taker has to type one of 10 complicated product descriptions. By touching a specified key on the keyboard, say the F1 function key, a colored window might pop up showing each of the 10, with the letters a, b, c, etc., in front of each one. By simply touching a letter, the description can be typed automatically.

Or suppose the order-taker needed to have all the technical details of the 10 products readily at hand to answer questions. The F2 function could bring up a window listing all the products again, but this time with the letters k, l, m, etc., in front of each one. By touching a letter, the screen can show a full product description.

At any time, by simply touching the escape key, the windows will disappear and the user will be returned to the original program.

Are there any drawbacks to using Flash-Up Windows? Just one. You usually have to remember which key calls up the window you're looking for.

Nonetheless, I still found Flash-Up Windows to be immensely useful and well worth its $90 price. It's available from many local computer dealers or directly from Software Bottling Co., Maspeth, N.Y.

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